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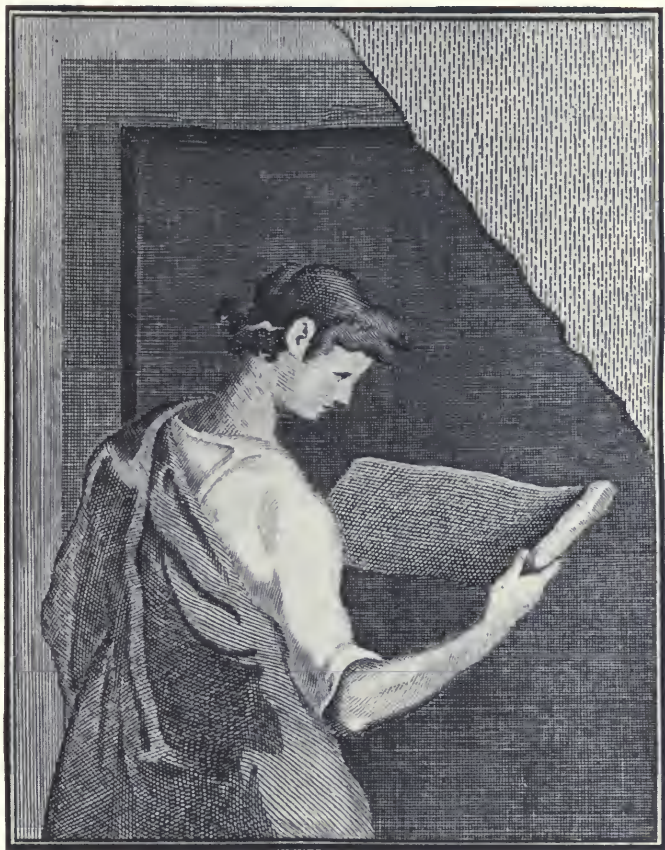


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# **“STERMINATOR VESEVO „**





MATILDE SERAO

# “STERMINATOR VESEVO”

(Vesuvius the great Exterminator)

Diary of the eruption of April 1906.



NAPLES  
FRANCESCO PERRELLA, EDITOR

1907  
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*In translating this book by Matilde Serao, I have felt as if none of its beautiful local colour, of its warmly felt and vivid description should be altered by an attempt on my part to give to its pages a perfect English intonation. One thing would have been, unavoidebly, the loss of the other, as no language can render in all its truth and form, the warm and deep expression of southern Italian imagination and sentiment. Thus, this diary retains the deep impression of*

*the moment in which it was written, while  
the bold strokes of colour and the tender  
pathos of some of its pages, bring, once  
more forward to public admiration, the  
brilliant name of Italy's foremost woman  
writer, Matilde Serao*

*the translator*

L. H.

Friend and reader,

Do not ask of these pages the prestige of art or the fascination of style. They were written day by day, with a trembling heart, and with an emotion that often caused the pen to drop from the hand of the tired and distressed writer. They were written, each night on returning from the country where the exterminating fury of the mountain had destroyed men and things, and while still under the horror of the terrible vision. Thus, rather than a cold

litterary dissertation, my reader, you will find in these pages, the simple, deep and tragic story of the eruption, witnessed by my own mortal eyes. You will find tales of heroic people, and noble deeds which deserve to be recalled and exalted. My friend and reader, these are pages of sorrow and distress, and they are written with a sincere heart. Nothing else.

Naples — May 1906.

MATILDE SERAO

QUIA PULVIS ES...







It all happened very suddenly, just about half past two, while the last smart equipages were hurriedly driving to the Campo di Marte. In a moment a huge brownish cloud, pushed by the wind, arose from Vesuvius, spreading all over the sky, hiding the white light of the day, darkening the sun. An immense cloud which wrapped all the mountain in a black thick smutty shade, and fell dark and menacing on the green carpet of the race-ground, and on the brilliant gathered crowd. A strange curious,

indescribable spectacle it was indeed, bringing to mind, as through an extraordinary vision, the feast-day when Pompei was destroyed and the people were crowding at the Circus. A spectacle both powerful and mysterious, with the strange contrasting effect of the select and gay crowd merrily circulating, on the spacious grounds. Then, all at once, to everybody's wonder, cinders began to fall, quite a rain of fine dusty ashes, gradually increasing into a regular shower. A whole array of elegant sun-shades were soon spread-open, and a general transformation took place all around. Ladies' white dresses became grayish almost black, dark clothes took instead a lighter almost whitish hue, white hats looked as if powdered all over, while all the roses, the innumerable roses on the hats were thickly spread with ashes, as if

the «memento homo quia pulvis es», had been pronounced on them. Tears brought on by the caustic rain were in everybody's eyes, though, all smiled fearlessly and gayly. The Duchess of Aosta's black dress looked as if a gray gauze had been spread over it; every man, every officer, the most elegant young men, the smartest sportmen were not to be recognised. As for the beaver hats, their condition was indescribable. And ashes, ashes on the coaches, on the autos, on the houses, ashes every-where! At a certain moment however, the wind changed, the heavy cloud became lighter, the sun took leave from the dying day, and the pale azure sky smiled again on us. And nothing could be then more curious to look at, than all those people, all those equipages, all that scenery, bearing the signs of a strange and rare telluric

phenomena. Yet, with the exception of servants, chambermaids, and coachmen, who naturally had hard work on hand brushing, washing and cleaning everything, nobody seemed preoccupied. As for the undersigned, a victim of her duty, while she is writing, ashes are falling thickly over her hair, shoulders, paper, and every object around her.

April 1906.



TOWARDS THE CITY OF FIRE



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All night long , hour after hour, we have had more and more alarming news from Vesuvius, and a rain of cinders in the late night, has increased the terror in everybody's mind and heart. The morning is profoundly sad with its still dark sea, with all the streets so black, with that strange sense of anxiety and surprise, among those we meet.

The duke of Aosta has set off for Boscotrecase, Cardinal Prisco has gone also there, and later, the duchess of Aosta has followed. It looks as though a whole crowd was starting out for

that town. All carriages seem to go in the same direction, towards the Circumvesuviana station. The tramways are loaded ! What are we doing here, why don't we start like all the others ? Let us go, and see these deserted, and destroyed countries, let us go and see Boscotrecase threatened by the monstrous lava ready to burn it up. Let us run to see Torre Annunziata threatened by the same, let us go to hear the desperate weeping of women, the screams of children, the moans of the old people. In the train, in the train, for it is too slow going by carriage. Let us go like thousand of people have gone, in the train, since we don't possess an automobile which could help us to fly on the main roads, way up yonder, where destruction takes place.

In the train, in the train ! It is easier said, than done. An immense crowd of

people anxious to start, are seiging the station of the *Circumvesuviana*, and the most extraordinary scenes naturally happen, since, if this beautiful and fine railroad, girdling Vesuvius, carries generally about a thousand persons a day, it cannot transport to-day fifty thousand. And really it has already worked wonders, due of course, to the energy, calm, and tact of Mr. E. Rocco, and director Ingarami. It has worked wonders, doubling and multiplying its trains from dawn to mid-night, each of them starting with their platforms packed, with their cars jammed with people, standing the most impetuous assaults at every small, intermediate station. For whole bands of foreigners, are waiting in these small stations, and they rush in to take whatever seat they may find. Here all species of Neapolitans are coming, the best known



as the least: groups, coteries, families, parties of friends, who like an immense human legion intend to go to Boscotrecase. And little by little, with the young foreign girls attired in their short excursion dresses, their hats covered with large white veils, with the elegant and loquacious Neapolitan ladies, with the friends and acquaintances which one meets, with the continuous screaming and yelling, now stronger, now softer, with the most extraordinary buzz of conversation, the sense of fright and anguish gradually dies away. The big cloud of ashes which wrapped us up in the beginning of the trip, disappears after Bellavista, the sky is getting clearer, and of a delicate azure colour. In the train people begin to joke, and at S. Giorgio a Cremano, a whole company of young girls, jesting and laughing, gets up in our train. And now

this immense torrent of humanity running towards Boscotrecase, looks almost like a large pleasure excursion. One would think that merry and thoughtless life had had the best of fright. And what fright! The main-road going from Torre Annunziata to Boscotrecase, is getting dark, almost black with carriages and automobiles. One of these is coming down from Boscotrecase. There are friends in it, and the train having stopped, we ask them what is the latest news. « The lava has stopped », they cry, shaking their heads and shoulders as if disappointed. In the train people are getting altogether merry.

A big crowd of people coming down, meets at Boscotrecase a still bigger crowd going up, with a confusion of carriages, wagons, automobiles, byciclets, all moving towards that fine country, so

richly surrounded, by farms, vines, gardens, and which seems still so calm under the grasp of its terrible enemy. And the people coming down describe with gesticulations, and impressive words, what they have seen not very far off, and they look all excited as though they had witnessed a grand and incomparable spectacle! The crowd moves on, then stands still for some time, for there is no place for it, in the beautiful little town. The peasants of Boscotrecase stand around the tourists, silent and still. Nobody is crying, no sad faces are to be seen, no complaints are to be heard, nobody asks or pretends to ask for anything. A liturgic sound reaches our ears at a cross path off the road, and a general silence is made in the thick crowd. A rough wooden cross appears, and behind it, over the heads of the

people, an ancient statue of S. Anne, the protectress of Boscotrecase, the Madonna's mother. S. Anne, the powerful old woman, as these southern people call her, is seen. This statue must be very ancient. It has a thin face, crowned by locks of white hair, the thoughtful face of an old woman bending down on the fresh and young face of a little girl. The statue moving on, waves over the crowd. It was taken out yesterday from the church of the Oratorio, which is near B. quite close to the lava, and it has been left there, on the very extreme spot where the lava was rapidly advancing, in the direction of Boscotrecase. This morning, at ten o'clock, this first lava has stopped ten meters from the statue of S. Anne, while the other branch on the right, stopped half an hour later. Far away in the country,

five or six farm houses, abandoned two days before, have been surrounded by it, fortunatly they were empty, without even furniture in them. But Boscotrecase is safe, and S. Anne carried in triumphal procession, enters the town.

The women sing softly some religious verses while walking behind the statue. There is a certain sadness in their voices. Many kneel down and pray, men lift their hats. The old statue of the thoughtful woman, looking calmly to her daughter, is above the crowd. Foreigners look with interest, and the sceptic, and those who have no faith dare say nothing, for really, the lava has stopped this morning, at a certain distance from S. Anne, and if this fact is due to nature, these people don't care, all they want to know is that they



have been saved once more, by the prayers of the Protectress.

Now, a priest speaks to the people, begging them to be calm and hope in God's help. This priest is very fervent, he has been preaching and speaking for two days, advising his people to be calm! This morning he has spoken before the lava. The statue descends slowly towards its church, having done its work of charity. Automobiles are rushing every where, whips are cracking, torrents of people push on. Bosco is black, the country is black all around, swarms of men and women rush down, while others come up. We pass by a mound of earth accumulated there for the purpose of deviating, if possible, the lava. Near this mound the houses are empty, and the doors open. Perhaps this same

night, their owners, eluding the watch, will return to sleep in them. I have seen some mattresses brought in these abandoned house.

But while we climb up towards the lava, the mouth of Vesuvius above our heads, roars and thunders. A great column of white, gray, and black smoke stands erect on the cone, and notwithstanding the full day light, we see through those dark and light clouds, long flames arising as through a veil, and showers of sparkles fall in a mass of fire around the mouth, towards our right. The mountain thunders, and breathes as a colossus, it sparkles terribly, dashing stones of fire, masses of fire, rocks of fire every where.

The merriness of the trip seems subdued, and the frivolous chattering is hushed altogether. People going towards

the lava walk in awe, and silent wonder. Every path either steep or easy, is now getting black with people.

But in the great silence of this crowd, in that immense silence, only the roaring of the Vulcano, tells the story of this great telluric cataclism. Are we not feeling, perhaps, the earth trembling under our steps? The mountain lightens in flames, getting redder and redder, more brilliant and dazzling every moment. Here in this great valley, once formed by another eruption, here were vines, and olives grew on old lavas of remote times, here is the lava of yesterday. Amazing spectacle! The gigantic black mass rises powerful and straight, quite at a few steps from us, and it looks like a dark sea petrified in its foaming waves, a stormy black sea, magically transformed in stone or rocky substance, a har-

dened, dead sea. Ah! why is 'nt it dead? Fire and flames are still living within, and now and then it blazes, burns out, shows its incandescence. Under our feet the earth is warm, but a little further it is burning.

On the right, the other branch of the lava, the one which has still an imperceptible movement, shows a burning turnace under its black and rough stratus, from which masses of fire detach themselves rolling down at our feet, while all around it, large drops of fire fall on the ground, and gradually melt away. Wonderful sight!

Little by little, the fascination of this tremendous thing, of this black and stony sea which once was fire and lava, which is now rock, but still is lava, still is fire inside, seems to fascinate all of us. even the most timid. Women, old people, chil-

dren draw imprudently near, bend over, plunge theirs sticks, their umbrellas in the furnace, with a daring and audacity nearing madness. And Vesuvius continues to roar quite over us. Way up go the flames of the crater, while night falls.

Before us the brown and monstrous mass of the two still lavas, rises frightful and menacing. Terror seems now to take hold of peasants, gentlemen, indigens, Neapolitans, foreigners. A hush of tragedy is over that country of tragedy, with the hardly conjured danger of this night, and the imminent danger of to morrow.

April 8 1906.



A PRAYER





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Surely, there does not live a pious and tender soul who, in these days of anguish, has not pronounced with intimate ardour, with intimate impulse, some sacred words, imploring the mercy of God on a population struck by such terrible calamity.

There lives not a warm soul who, under the shock of this terrible pang, has not felt the need of appealing to a divine power of kindness and mercy. There lives not a cold soul who has not

been moved and, has not silently asked for peace, in such a tragic misfortune.

Oh ! yes. Let all tender and fervid hearts. all humble and brotherly spirits, all creatures strong with faith and hope, firm in an undoubtful promise, let them ask to the Lord, in every conceivable form, the end of this tremendous punishment.

It has fallen on too many people, it has devastated too many countries , it frightens now the most sceptic, and the most audacious. Let all those who know, who will , who can pray , in the secret of their consciences, of their houses, in the shadow of the churches, all, even those who never pray, those who will not pray, let them ask of God the end of this horrible calamity. It now weighs too heavily, with its terrible unforeseen, with its funest surprises, with its more and more

frightful forms, not only, on those picturesque and thriving villages, extending from the cone down to the sea, but it weighs on Naples, on its six hundred thousand inhabitants, and on all the southern region. All Italy is trembling with sorrow, listening to the fabulous and yet real story of such a great catastrophe. God of mercy listen, listen to the prayer of all those who pour out their soul to you, who raise their hands to you. Listen God of goodness, father of the unfortunate, of the miserable, of the poor, of those who are running away, grant the desolate, desperate, hopeful trusting prayers of those who ask of you the end of this terrible cataclism. Sinners and innocents are begging you oh Lord of all Charities, children, women, old people, men who have lived too much, and young ones who have

not lived enough, and together they implore you to let this tremendous sea of fire, stones, lapillus, and ashes be stopped. They implore you to let this lightning and thunder, these roars, these terrible convulsions of the mountain be ended, oh Lord, ended! Thousands, hundred of thousands of persons ask for the end of this dream of devastation and ruin! Cries, tears, sobs reach your throne oh! Lord, do grant the supreme grace, let this terrible destruction end. Man is only a poor being of flesh and blood, he is weak, and his mind wonders, and his conscience sinks Oh Lord! oh Lord! what is happening is much stronger than our courage and patience so unexpected and unheard as it is, so monstrously sad, and irreparable, alas! If you don't help us, oh Lord, your children will perish of grief, or will end in

untold anguish of despair while those who know, who want, who can pray implore your divine mercy on Naples on this splendid coast, and on this sublime gulf. Let all those who can think and act fight against this destruction, let them try to master it and to render it less terrible than it is, let the people go not only through frivolous curiosity to the places where the scenes of the Vesuvian catastrophe in all their horror are going on, but let them go with eyes of compassion, and with souls full of charity.

Do not let this visit to the squalid and deserted villages, to the places where the black mountain of lava is advancing in waves of stone, and in waves of fire, be a sport. Don't let it be a diversion or a pastime to relate among friends the sensational scenes which have

been witnessed. Men of good will, women of good will, each as one may, as one knows, as one must, put your energy, your patience and all your virtues in a sublime effort to mitigate this calamity, to fight it, and, at last, with the help of God and that of men, to conquer it. Let every man find all his strength, forgetting himself and his own small, and perhaps miserable interests, and let the sense of charity become heroic in all those who have some will, strength, courage, and valor.

Let everybody do his own duty and even beyond his duty, and to this terrible catastrophe will then be opposed another ammount of will, of thinking and reasoning will. Let this panic of the more cultured classes be conquered by influential words, and by the example of all the directing classes; let everybody sacrifice

himself, from the prince to the civil functioneer, and let each of them perform those acts of abnegation which are the seal of human fraternity. Let cold blood and the stubborn decision to fight the conflagration triumph, and victory will be man's. Let this folly of lies, inventions, and exaggerations end, and with it, this infamy of false news printed in some papers with the sole intent to sell them. Let those who have some heart show it by advising others to be calm, by consoling the afflicted and the poor, and providing to their material and moral needs! Let this heart be demonstrated by all the civic virtue which are necessary in these terrible crisis, and this will be another way to show that they are men, christians, and that they are all bound in a same part of joy and sorrow.

9<sup>th</sup> April 1906.





IN THE DEAD TOWNS



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To day, our trip towards the countries where destruction goes on, is much sadder and silent. Whilst on every side, from every person, from every telephonic communication, from every telegram, the most distracting news reach us, whilst the first impulse is that of starting, of running there where people are suffering, where they are agonizing with fright and sorrow, we all know that the Circumvesuviana railway is interrupted, and we understand how difficult it is to go there quickly, or in any useful way. A secret rage is in our heart against

this blind and brutal power on which all our arms of civilisation fall and break, and we unwillingly resign ourselves to go as we can, just where the lava permits us, where the eruption allows us, where Vesuvius wishes, and no further.

We leave Naples by carriage, in the afternoon. The city has a depressed look, and is unusually quiet. While we cross from Ponte della Maddalena to S. Giovanni a Teduccio, the last people on the road disappear. Only now and then an automobile passes us, but the people inside are quite hidden under their wraps and masks. Then an old dirty char-banc rolls by, then again a loaded tram, but nobody is laughing, nobody is speaking. All along the streets, on the sidewalks, in the shops, silence is getting deeper, and more intense. True it is Sunday, it is four o'clock, the hour

when people here rest, but the silence is still more intense at Portici, and its closed villas, its closed shops, have a singular aspect. Now and then something moving comes towards us, directed to Naples. It is a little cart, two little carts, several carts, all loaded with furniture, especially with mattresses. A silent driver leads the wagon, and we turn round to look at these last people escaping, for in these last fifteen hours everybody has been running away with his furniture, in all directions, especially towards Naples. These whom we meet must have been delayed in their flight, they are worn out from exertion, and almost prostrated. Portici is deserted and solitary, not a single woman at the window, not a person before the houses.

Hall doors and shutters are locked, and the most absolute emptiness and de-

sertion reigns every where. Our mind is getting depressed, and our sadness increases when we see the complete solitude of Resina and Torre del Greco, the lovely little towns layed between gardens of orange trees, and the sea. It is indeed a heart-rending squallor ! The charming towns of Portici, Resina, Torre del Greco, are now completely abandoned, not a soul is left there. They look as dead towns, quite as if dead and deserted since many and many years — Nobody is there to tell us the panic, the terrible panic that has set these people flying for safety, but we know it, we can easily imagine it since we see with our mortal eyes, abandon and death every where. But did Resina, Portici, and Torre del Greco, ever live? Did these windows, these doors ever open? Were there ever people in these houses, in these streets? Like an immense colos-

sus the pine of smoke rises on the mountain, and everything is shut out from our sight on account of the ashes, clouds, and vapors filling the air. Only the lightning is visible, the thousand flashes cutting the livid and opaque gray. And life is only there on the mountain of horrors, whilst here nothing more is living.



We now wonder whether we shall still find Torre Annunziata the same thriving town, full of energy, work, and action, Torre Annunziata of which we are so proud, which is a glory of ours, since its life has a great importance, and its population is good active, and very laborious. This is our hope as we enter it. Alas! Here are some wagons coming with furniture, and there is a sick man, an

old man on a mattress, laying in a small carriage. They are all slowly moving towards Naples.

Yes also Torre Annunziata is dead ! All the houses are closed, all the working shops are deserted. Foundries, manufactures, establishments, all is closed. Never could we have believed that in a single hour, in a short hour of desperate panic, all this could have happened, and that this town this magnificent instrument of work and industry, should be stopped and destroyed like the pines up yonder, in the great valley of the Oratorio at Boscotrecase.

At midnight, the nine tenth of the population, at the terrible cry that the lava is advancing towards the city, begin to escape. In one single night 30.000 people have abandoned their roof, have gathered their dear ones, their goods, and have fled



to Nocera, Castellamare, Sarno, Salerno, Naples, Calabria, Basilicata. All have fled in one single night. But why? And how has this possibly happened? Men of the people in silent groups, hardly answer our queries; they simply point to a street towards which people, alighting from carriages and autos, direct their steps, The lava is there, much nearer than that which stopped outside Boscotrecase the other night, and which invaded it altogether later in the night. The lava is yonder, on the livid background, darkened by the clouds wrapping up the mountain, there where a large white smoke arises, pushed by the wind. It is the road which leads to Boscotrecase, the same road which day before yesterday, while laughing and jesting, we saw full of carriages, cabs, and merry people. Now, all is changed. From that road the lava

has come down. The great white smoke leads us, while the wind blows harder. We see trees bending down, they are cypress, the rich cypress of the cimiterio of Torre Annunziata, one of the neatest, most poetical cimiteries I ever saw.

And the monster is here, quite near. The lava is here, its scorching monstruosity is here, in front of the cimiterio, but somehow it has branched out, it has not touched the ground sacred to the dead. It comes down in deformed and grotesque waves, wide, high, incandescent on the sides and on the edges, it has unwalled a house, it has destroyed the railway of the Circumvesuviana but, happily, it has not touched the cimiterio.

A dead silence reigns among the people grouped on the low walls, on stone piles, behind the gates, and all gaze at the lava, at the monster, but thank

heaven, the picturesque cimiterly is still untouched.

But what will happen in the night what will happen to-morrow? Can't the dead rest even under the ground, and they who will want to-pray to-morrow on the tombs of their dear ones, will they be obliged to realize that a new mound of carth, and this time of fire, has buried them, and their graves, for the second time.



IN THE COUNTRY OF DEATH



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## GOING TOWARDS SOMMA

While we run at all speed with the elegant automobile a kind friend has lent us towards the other Vesuvian countries not touched by the lava, but about which all kind of sad reports reach us, we hear on all sides the same selfish expressions, the same striking, and wounding words. Where are you going? Where do you wish to go? Are you mad? You cannot go any farther up, there is lava, there are stones, lapillus, ashes! That country is destroyed! The other side is surrounded! You are mad!

But though irritated, annoyed, offen-

ded by this superficial and selfish talk, we go on, we advance towards Cercola, Sant'Anastasia, the Madonna dell'Arco, following the tracks of the Royal Automobile, as the king and queen have climbed up there before us, and have already come back. We cannot believe that we may not reach Somma, or that Somma is destroyed; we do not believe that one cannot get to Ottaiano by some means at least, even if this pretty and rich little town is destroyed as people with a half ironical, half resigned smile, tell us, unwilling as they are to go, and give their help. Ah! sure, we poor writers of human troubles can do but very little, but we want to see this sorrow with our own eyes, we want to relate it that it might touch the heart of people to heroism and pity, and we want to relate it just as it is, just as it exists, by



personally witnessing everything, as we have always done.

On this road that goes to Somma, other people have passed an hour ago, and we also want to go over it all, even through ashes and lapillus, over the stones, just as we can, by carriage, on foot, any-way. As we advance we begin to see all over the country around us, something like a mantle of snow. Has it snowed on the fields, on the trees?

No, the Vesuvian ashes, with the rami and the dew, have already changed into clorate of ammonia, and all is now white and brilliant under the pale rays of the sun. Here on the right, behind the mountain of Somma, things have taken a dark, livid aspect. An immense cloud of ashes and smoke is bending down over the hidden cone in the direction

of Torre Annunziata, Resina Portici, and night seems to reign there. Here instead, all is clear, all is candidly white. Our automobile is now going slower, it cracks between two deep sinks of ashes and lapillus. The wheels are now beginning to sink, and at the first little houses of Somma Vesuviana we stop, and ask the people if the king has passed. Yes, yes, the king has reached Somma Vesuviana with his automobile, and has insisted on continuing to Ottaviano, but the automobile having been caught and sunk in the ashes and lapillus, it has been impossible to advance. He has insisted on going on foot, but it would have been at least a four hours' journey. The carabinieri have tried to push, the royal automobile with their arms, but without success. Then the king has decided to go back. And now, in the great

solitude of this grand landscape, in the silence of things, we are really struck by the idea that something terrible must have happened up there, and that the disaster may come near being, what it was one day at Pompei!

## AT SOMMA VESUVIANA

We leave our automobile. Two other large empty ones watched by a chauffeur, are here. One belongs to the duke of Aosta, who has come here this afternoon with count d'Aglié and lieutenant Gaston Pagliano proceeding with them on horseback or on foot to Ottaiano or S. Giuseppe di Ottaiano, knee deep through ashes, stones, and lava. The other automobile belongs to the duchess of Aosta. This brave and courageous woman has reached this place a little later, and has gone to Ottaiano on foot, not caring for the enormous difficulties and fatigue she would encounter. While we are trying to imitate her,

here is all the population of pretty Somma Vesuviana around us: men, women, children, crowding, and putting to us a thousand questions, while we, answering, address just as many to them. Digging up the earth they show us the three stratus forming the mound that has covered their little homes and fields. Three stratus, a reddish one, a blackish one, and one of stones, alas! just like Pompei. Women with babies in their arms speak slow and low, and mournfully complain of their fate. They have, had, as they say, three nights of hell: the first all lightning and flashes, when their terror has been terrible, though they thought they were protected by the great mountain of Somma, and no lava would run down on their side. The second a night full of fright and ruination, and the third, the one between Saturday

and Sunday, when the terrible rain of ashes, lapillus, and stones, began.

They have fled terrified through their farthest fields, way down as possible. The most courageous have past the night in the open air, with their children around them, trembling with fear praying, and weeping. Next day they have been wandering around their houses, trying to free them from the weight of the cinders and stones, helping each other, simply resigned and abandoned to their fate, trying all the means to conquer it. The third night, the last one, they have all slept with their poor little ones, clasped in their arms, on the straw, in the fields, not daring to go back into the houses.

Men and women are now looking at their buried fields, their destroyed harvest, the heavy cinders, the heavy rocks.

They look at the work of this night which throws them in the most abject poverty and starvation, they look over it all with eyes of calm despair, and it seem to me a shame for the human heart that they hope nothing, and ask nothing from the men of Naples, their brothers in God, their brothers in Jesus. They ask nothing, because they know of obtaining nothing.

At Somma Vesuviana one man has died in Margarita street. An old man by the name of Raffaele, known as Tuppete, He died in his bed, crushed under the fall of his roof. Twenty or thirty houses have tumbled down at Somma Vesuviana, one church is in great danger, the walls of another are cracked. Men bend their heads and are silent, others sadly admit that their misery is nothing compared to the destruction of Ottaiano

where more than one hundred and fifty people have died. Has Ottaiano then been destroyed only by the fall of lapillus and stones? Surely the lava cannot run on it, as the town is placed on the opposite side of the eruption. — Have really so many people perished under this heavy and fiery rain, while not one has perished under the lava? Is it Pompei again? Let us go there then, if it is true.



## AT OTTAIANO

Here we are on the road of the Croce, going step by step, with the slowness of death, sinking deep in the ashes, and looking in vain for a safer path. We go over it with a sense of immense oppression, not knowing when or whether we will arrive, not knowing if our strength will last until we get there. We meet a cart coming down. The poor horse is already tired. It would take at least three horses to drag a carriage through these roads now made of ashes and stones. The cart driver tells us about the many people who have perished at Ottaiano and shakes his head when we ask him the number. It is large,

many people were killed while praying in the Oratorio of San Giuseppe! Crushed under the weight of our sorrow, we resume our walk on the road of the Croce, where so few people have passed before. Only a prince of Casa Savoia, only a daughter of the house of France and the soldiers of Italy, the brave soldiers the good soldiers, have come this way. What time is it when we reach Ottaiano? Who knows? Who knows anything more about the hour, about time, about life, in these last four days? We feel as if we had been walking for centuries in this hard, rough, horrible street: we feel as if we had to stop at every step and rest; at last, we reach the new Pompei, Ottaiano.

An untold horror of devastation is around us. The most beautiful as well

as the poorest houses have tumbled down under the weight of the cinders and stones, and every-where you see a precipice of bricks, beams, and rocks: it is the death-like solitude of the places where death has passed. A gentleman from Ottaiano, who has just returned here to give some help, tells us all about the catastrophe. It seems that the cinders have begun to fall thickly during the second night from Saturday to Sunday, and it was then that the people, getting alarmed, have left their houses, the exodus having started about dawn. But in the following morning, the stones have come down thicker and larger, rebounding and accumulating, and, at the remembrance of the horrible scene, and the flight from Ottaiano, poor M. Cola's voice trembles. He however, with the help of his brothers, managed to save his

mother, carrying her in his arms to Sarno where she is now, he told us, perfectly safe. It seems that in a few minutes all the panes of the windows were broken, people running away with chairs and tables on their heads, to protect themselves from the rocks, others with folded covers and pillows, shielding their heads, and shoulders. And while they fled on every side, falling down in their haste, wounding their hands and knees under the infernal shower of hissing rocks, the houses at Ottaiano, were tumbling down. Poor baroness Scudieri, while running away, must have heard the crash of her palace, and of the whole manufacture Scudieri falling in ruins, while in the same moment on the other side Ateneo Chierchia, and the house belonging to the brothers Cola, just then remoderned, were falling in a heap. What struck us as strange

was how, in the midst of so great a ruination, the grand palace of Prince Ottaiano remained untouched, standing alone and erect as if in mute contemplation of this immense destruction.

To Nola, Sarno, Castellamare, Mari-gliano, people fled from Ottaiano, and the poorest, finding no shelter, ran about the fields, and over the whole country, as far as possible from the place of the disaster. There must be dead people under these stones. In a house seven persons have been buried, a whole family, and through the door we see the half bust of a man, dead, a poor wretch who must have tried to open it, and escape, just as many did in the catastrophe of Pompei ! Beautiful Ottaiano, the finest place in the Vesuvian comunes is, sadly to say, destroyed for four fith, and what remains will

have to be demolished, being quite in a dangerous condition. Poor abandoned, isolated country, helped by nobody, left to its fate for a whole day and a half. But for the duke of Aosta, who went there with his troops, it would have remained in this condition with its dead and wounded for eight days longer. And yet people are returning here and they even dare to go over the road of the Croce. Here comes a family of peasants on an old broken down char-à banc. The poor mother has a child clasped in her arms, she is as pale as death ! The father holds another child, four larger ones are laying on some straw, a real human pile, sad and deserted. We tell them not to return to Ottaiano, for their house will surely fall on their heads. But they protest, and declare that they will sleep in the open air, that

they want to return among the ruins. The woman is terribly pale, and the children are terrorised. Here is a tall thin old man, coming on foot. Ah! how he weeps, how he weeps! How sad it is to see an old man weeping. We tell him not to venture in Ottaiano, we beg him not to go, and he excitedly exclaims: I want to see, I want to see whether anything has remained of our country, and, he goes in almost stumbling, disappearing the new Pompei.

## DEATH

Only this formidable name can be given to Ottaiano. From that terrible Saturday night, till the following Sunday when the first threatening signs appeared, the church bells have been ringing madly and everybody has started to pray.

The fall of ashes increasing and getting quite menacing, Rev. parson Luigi d'Ambrosio has requested the population to meet in the church of the Oratorio of San Giuseppe. How many were they? Three-hundred? Yes, perhaps three-hundred. The bells continued to ring desperately, as in a frantic appeal, the ashes fell thicker and thicker, down bounded the stones accumulating heavily



everywhere, and crushing every thing. All at once, with a tremendous roar, down comes the roof of the church crushing and killing all those who were under it praying. Perhaps hundred or eighty people have escaped, running away mad with terror, and among these, fortunatly, the Rev. parson d'Ambrosio has saved his life.

But from one hundred to one hundred and twenty persons have been crushed and asphissiated under the rocks and beams of the old church, and by the enormous quantity of ashes which have buried them. And yet, while they are taken out by our brave and intrepid soldiers, we realize that most of these poor victims, have really died from suffocation.

The women are many, and many are the children. But behold ! Here comes

the woman of all goodness and tenderness, here comes the Duchess of Aosta, led by her tender heart to this country of death. She bends over the corpses and is piously praying over them.

Then she goes towards a tent where the wounded people have been taken, and speaks kindly to them, encouraging and helping them. How many are the corpses already drawn out from the ruins at S. Giuseppe of Ottaiano? Sixty? There are some more. How many are the wounded? Twenty, thirty? The soldiers are still searching and more will be found. As for the people remaining, they are frightened to death from the shock, we must give them bread, and shelter. This, this is really the country of death! There, where the lava has passed, people have fled, where showers of mud have fallen, people

have been able to escape, where there has been great danger, help has been brought, like at Boscotrecase, Torre Annunziata, Resina, Torre del Greco, but here, at Ottaiano, at S. Giuseppe, in this great solitude and abandon, the terrible host, death, has passed.

April 10<sup>th</sup> 1906.



## THE HEROES



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We shall see, we must see, it is our duty to see later, but not too late, who have been the cowards, the depraved, the stupid men who have dishonored humanity with their cowardice, with their vile-ness, with their stupidity, in this horrible catastrophe.

More especially those who have been discharging public and administrative duties, and have abandoned their posts even when there was no danger. Those cowards who did not go where their functions called them, giving all kind of pretexts or excuses, and prudently

locking themselves up in their houses. Those cowards who, having the greatest duties of civic courage to fulfil, have tried to blame others' courage and valor in order to retain the respect of the public. Let all these, and the soonest possible, that is, as soon as this devastation is finished, let all these cowards be denounced to public opinion! We have already heard many of their names, later on more will be called out, and every body will know who are those who muffled their conscience in this terrible plight, and neglected their duties. And we shall also speak of those who have been so degenerated as to turn to their advantage this calamity unexpectedly fallen on an innocent people, and among these speculators of all kind, we shall also place those newspaper men who have set the greatest panic among the



people, printing continually false news, increasing (and there was no need of it!) the proportions of this tremendous catastrophe, simply for the greed of selling their papers, the consequences of which have been of the greatest damage to the poor people of those communities, not only, but have made a terrible impression on Naples especially, destroying its very life! We shall not spare either those foolish individuals who seem to add to all calamities by their stupidity, who fall among us like a punishment of God, nor those who prevent willing people from working, or acting, in fact who are a real disaster to humanity. And yet it looks as if, of disasters, we had had more than our share! We will speak of all this but not just now, it is not quite time to settle our accounts, we must wait for this terrible conflagration

to end! Then all those who have been miserably vile, who have been mercenary and stupid, all these people, real calamity of calamities, must be called before a moral tribunal, and must be branded forever before the public.

Not now! The moment of their judgement will come, must come!



But what must not be delayed another moment, is the proclamation, before our whole country, before the world, of those who have been the heroes of this scene of horror and despair.

The soldiers have been the heroes, the soldiers are the heroes! From the first of them, Emanuele Filiberto of Savoia, high minded, noble hearted man,

rom this duke of Aosta to whom is due all the organization of rescue, and of order, from this worthy nephew of Victor Emanuel the great king, from this very worthy nephew of Umberto of Savoia, who twenty-two years ago, in the hospitals of Naples, helped and tendered the people dying from cholera, from this Emanuele Filiberto, who is tenderly loved and admired, to the humblest, to the most modest of soldiers, they only and alone have been the heroes of this terrible eruption. Not only heroes of courage, but of untiring activity, not only of impulse but of faithfulness, not only heroes before danger, but before fatigue, privations and sacrifice.

Everything has been done by these brave soldiers in these last five days, beginning with the duke of Aosta, who has had no rest, going every where calm and

silent, without pomp, without blague, without any useless talking, giving the most efficacious orders with the kindest manners, resolution, and firmness, to general Tarditi the illustrious man, the great soul of soldier, full of talent, culture, and valor, down to all the other officers to all the other soldiers. They have defied and conquered the lava, and lapillus, going always ahead there where duty called them. They have looked for the dead and the wounded among the ruins, and they have buried the corpses with their own hands. They have demolished the tumbling houses and built straw-huts for those who were running away: they have divided their bread, yes, their bread, these dear soldiers, with the peasants and women, with the children: they have kept long watches in the most dangerous places;

they have given the greatest help there where destruction seemed worse, and all this has been truly heroic! Who has gone to Boscotrecase surrounded by fire, but the soldiers? Who, has gone to Ottaiano and to S. Giuseppe, from the very first day, when nobody had dared go there, but the soldiers, from the duke of Aosta, the majors, the captains the lieutenants, to the last soldier? Who has brought bread to the hungry, and water to the thirsty? Who has tried to free the streets, the houses from the ashes and stones? At Ottaiano, the sister of one of our newspaper men owes her children's life to the soldiers, who, after having saved them, have fed them, taking the bread from their very own mouths.

At Torre Annunziata, in a desperate moment, when the lava was almost touching the cimitero, I bent over the

opening of a wooden fence which closed a large field on which the lava was advancing, and before this great black and red monster, the field seemed deserted ! Only a soldier, a simple soldier was there in a solitary corner. There he stood before the lava advancing near him: he was there alone, perhaps to keep the little fence from being broken down by the frivolous curiosity of the crowd. Here in the barracks the soldiers are sheltering those who are running away, giving them food and courage, and with the same courage and heart, they gather to them all lost children. Oh unknown heroes! oh our own heroic brothers! oh! our heroic own sons, here through you, the honor of humanity is saved. For you we are still left to believe that the most admirable virtues can still live in the heart of men. Oh you heroes before life

and death, heroes for valor and for goodness, you great heroes from your young leader to the generals and officers, all of you martyrs and heroes, our own salvation, our own strength, our own glory, our soldiers !

11<sup>th</sup> April 1906.





LET US SPEAK TO THE PEOPLE



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Very Eminent Prisco , archbishop of Naples, sitting on the mystic throne where the great pious soul of Sisto Riario Sforza shone of deepest faith, where the simple and kind soul of Guglielmo Sanfelice shone with the tenderest religious charity, you, whose loving heart as a minister is certainly aching, you who have already spoken to the people and to the clergy in the name of Christ, you who have already helped and promoted help, look very Eminent Prisco, our archbishop of Naples, look at the despair of the people

of Naples. The calamity which strikes us all, more or less, is indeed tremendous ! But its aspect above all has something so dreadfully threatening, to fill even the coldest and most courageous, with a sense of apprehension and awe. These immense clouds now gray, now livid, now reddish now black, towering over our heads, stretching from Vesuvius till here, covering the sea, the city, hiding the sun, darkening the air, these clouds, which will later fall in a long and heavy shower of cinders, these clouds which science and experience declares perfectly innocent it is true, and which enfold the whole city, oppressing it, and giving it such gloomy look, are terrifying, and frightening every body.

In the first days of the disaster, Neapolitans have maintained their usual calm and serenity, but now terror has

stricken the most, and has almost grown into a frenzy. We know, of course, that all these phenomena are more terrible in their appearance than in their substance, but the lower classes don't know this, and don't wish to know it, and their fear assumes now a furious dangerous character.

Through the papers we can do nothing, as the people don't read us, and generally do not know how to read us, neither can Government notices stuck on the city walls have any effect on them, since they cannot read them. And yet they seem to go mad, to lose complete control of themselves, they cry, scream, run madly, they yell, they don't pray anymore before the images of saints and madonnas. They have the despair of the child, of the savage, and this very frenzy is a rapid contagion rendering

life more desolate and difficult before this calamity.

All the most terrible instincts give way before this mad terror. We tremble at this new coming danger, and see no way to conquer it.



You, our dear bishop must conquer it. You must speak to the people once more, and with a calm and firm word, tell them that their life is in no danger, that they have nothing to fear from these black clouds sent by the eruption, from the ashes which fall on the streets and on the houses. Call your clergy, and tell them to speak to the people, in the churches, in the chapels,

in the congregations, in the sacristies. The priests of Naples are all very kind, they are quite near to the people for their virtues of Christian simplicity, and humility: they know how to make the people love them by the gentleness of their manners, and by that fatherly familiarity which is such treasure among us. Set these priests rectors, parsons, speak to the people, especially in this holy week, when sacred services are so frequent, when, oftener than ever, people go to church. Let the rectors, the parsons and all these men of holy moral authority, say to them that they must be calm, and serene, that there is no fear of death, that nobody will die under the lapillus, under the ashes, and that all these screams and moans are not acceptable to God, nor to his saints. Let those who always speak to the peo-

ple from the altar, from the pulpit, from, the confessional, from the sacristies, speak now, using all that influence they possess to control the soul of the most ignorant obscure. Let religion glorify itself in this civilised work of peace in the minds of this population. Let yourself and your clergy have the merit as Christian and as Neapolitan citizen, to calm this delirium of fright and give back tranquillity to all this population in confusion. Repeat, repeat to these poor people, that for them and their families no danger is to be feared, and people will believe it. Let this noble and great, work be one of those beautiful and glorious social events, of which religion has always been and is always capable when any misfortune has befallen to this city. Neapolitan people are accused of being su-



perstitutions and are despised for this: Be it your work and that of the clergy to demonstrate that only faith in its civil form, in its form of high moral beauty, can accomplish certain moral miracles where no other power of mind can reach.

April 12<sup>th</sup> 1906.



TO THE WOMEN OF NAPLES



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Women of Naples whose heart knows how to beat for all great, noble, beautiful things, oh ! women of Naples, possessing fervently and efficaciously the great virtue of piety, women of Naples, always kind and tender, whatever be your condition, either brilliant or obscure, whatever be your fortune, great or modest, whether God has granted you the supreme goods of life, or whether your life runs its simple and shaded course, you to whom the unfortunate ones never turn in vain, to whom the words of Christ, « who gathers to him a poor man,

gathers me », are a law of the heart, oh ! women of Naples, look around you, and see how thousands and thousands of poor unfortunate beings, men women, and children, your own brethren in Christ, have been stricken down by this tremendous calamity. They had a home and they have been obliged to flee from it not to remain buried under its ruins: they had an orchard and it is gone, they had a field and it is all buried under the stones, they had work and they cannot work anymore, they had some kind of industry , and all this is gone ! They are poor, exiled people, escaping for life, and notwithstanding all help, notwithstanding the great impulse of charity, they are too many, they are all a population of poor people, of starving people of naked people, and more must be done for them. Each of you women , either rich or poor, must

open her arms and heart to these poor miserable creatures. For even if they have a shelter, they are often without any bed; if they have a bed, they are perhaps without bread or without clothes. Women, Neapolitan women, let your help be given in all the possible forms and ways, gather up to your heart these poor unfortunate beings, just as if they represented the figure of Christ, and be generous to them in the kindest and noblest of charities. Look after these poor people, they are every-where, in every public institution, at Granilis, barracks at the Albergo dei Poveri, and we cannot do all for them, if you Neapolitan women don't give your part in bread in clothes, in all that is needed to feed a poor man, and to shelter him from cold. Neapolitan women, good Christians, in these days of mourning, be a

heavenly smile to these poor unfortunate ones. Good Christian women celebrate this Easter in the closest brotherhood with those who suffer.



Have you heard? In Granilis barracks from three thousand to three hundred people from the Vesuvian communes, have been sheltered, and among them there is an immense number of terrified and sorrowful women, and little children. There are a great many, perhaps thousand poor little creatures escaped from death in their mother's arms, in the terrible nights when the storm of cinders, stones, and fire was at its worse. — The noble impulse of the soldiers there, works



wonders, and the 19<sup>th</sup> infantry is certainly first in this noble and generous hospitality. — In this barrack, the people who escaped from the conflagration have shelter and food, and colonel Belluzzi, and his officers are entirely given to this high work of charity. But these poor people have no clothes to change, and the children especially are almost in a naked condition. What can these poor soldiers and officers do to clothes these destitute children? It is your task, Neapolitan women, now that you know it to gather up from your house all the coats, dresses, linen covers, all that is superfluous, and send it to the miserable people at Granilis barracks. You all have girls and boys, and your children have plenty of clothes they don't wear any more. Give them to these unfortunate ones, to these babies who are dear

to their mothers as yours are to you ! Gather up everything you can, bundle it up and send it all to the barracks. All will be useful, everything is useful. Also they who have no money to give, have a dress, a shift, a pair of shoes to dispose of, and thus you also, if you are not rich, can show your heart in this useful and simple way. Great committees are a great thing, but their work is too slow for too many reasons ! Without committees, without signing subscriptions, give your motherly charity, give bread and clothes, let it go from your hand to other hands, from heart to heart, at once, just as Christ has prescribed. And in doing this noble work, you Neapolitan women, will feel your soul expand with emotion and tenderness thinking that each of those little creatures you will dress with your own children 's clothes is a little

unknown brother to them, and you will bless God to have been able to perform one of the noblest and highest works, one of the highest duties which belongs to our soul.

April 12<sup>th</sup> 1906.



# EASTER OF RESURRECTION



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A few hours after this paper will have reached your hands, my readers, you will hear, in the morning air a sound from afar, or perhaps near, a light and touching sound. And even if in that moment you are quite taken up by thoughts of interest and pleasure, by the cares of a long day, you will start, and a whole crowd of remembrances, perhaps of hopes, will spring out from your heart living in the past, and filled with illusions. Thus the Easter bells, those which Wolfgang Goethe, the poet of poets loved and exalted, those which touched the

heart of old Faust, the Easter bells, grave and soft at the same time, will tell you that a whole anniversary of sorrow has started and closed, and that a new spring, spring of triumph has appeared in a glory of light and perfumes, in the large and pure horizons where the spirits live. Never before as in this year did the holy week look so dark and sad to all hearts, for it was marred by the desperate cry of those who ran away under the shower of burning stones, by the missing of many frightened children, under the black threatening sky full of flashes and lightnings. Never before as in this week, the ancient prodigies which surrounded with their frightful expression the death of Christ, the flaming sky, the trembling earth, the torn veil from the Temple, seemed to repeat themselves in all their terrible truth. And never



before as in this year, the heart of all Christians wished ardently, through their warmest prayers, that these sad days should pass quickly away, and that resurrection of life, peace, serenity and joy should console human beings from the deep and terrible things they had experienced. How much sweeter, this morning, in the distance, will these Easter bells ring for us all, announcing to us, as a particular grace, the end of a conflagration that has troubled us so much, and brought so many bitter tears to our eyes. Resurrection to day will mean also in its symbolic and yet real language, the end of a week of passion and death, the end of a spiritual and material tragedy which has twice oppressed our tired and worn out souls: resurrection to-day with its slow and subtil bell-sound will mean, to those

who were agonising with dread the return of life.



Well let us live again ! Let this palpitating city undertake once more its works, its fatigues, its industries, all kind of business , all light-houses of progress : and from its hills, green in their spring dress, not withstanding its Vesuvian cinders to its sea so wonderfully calm, in these days let Naples live again its magnificent life ! — In every order of things let the almost dead organism resuscitate : from the offices to the theatres, from the churches to the schools from the banks to the tribunals, from art places to worldly cen-

ters, let Naples resuscitate from its week of passion and death.

Let the existence of six hundred thousand inhabitants proclame its rights, reacting against a mortal depression, and let in fact, existence conquer in a better way the incomensurable damages of this week of passion and death. Ah no ! don 't let us forget from one day to the other this terrible cataclism which only yesterday made us tremble, and the traces of which will never, be effaced again. Don 't let us forget the dead who slept in that tremendous night, and the living who were deprived of their roofs, bread and clothes. — But in order to exercise the most efficacious discipline in order to be of some relief to the hundred and fifty thousand unfortunate ones of the Vesuvian communities, let us live again, let us think, let us

wish, act, and work. Let the authorities help with wisdom and generosity this new life of Naples, making away with all prohibitions, making easy all difficulties of this crisis; untangling one by one, all the knots which obstructed our movements; and let every single citizen develop all their activity, without obstacles, without any stumbling stones. Let beautiful Naples resuscitate from this day, in all its beauty, goodness, and strength, this unfortunate city which has had its night of Chetsemene, sweating blood, but is now a stronger, younger and greater conqueror.

Let us live again for our country for our families, and for ourselves. Let us live again that we may help all our unfortunate brothers to live anew: let us live again in the fervor of actions in the ardor of will towards a great

good, not only in ourselves not around us only, but beside ourselves and much farther, towards all those who suffered unjustly and cruelly. The sad trial is finished: the hour of suffering is gone! our soul has been soothed. Let us all live again: let us each live for the other! and all for all.

April 14<sup>th</sup> 1906.



FOUR-THOUSAND  
LITTLE BOXES





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How great the irony of things is! Since last Thursday the fifth of April, when the cinders<sup>3</sup> began to fall from Vesuvius, indeed, while they were having the races at the Campo di Marte, and Naples was gay and merry, for the last eight days our post-offices have shipped more than four thousand wooden boxes. At first all this lot of small and curious boxes, carefully sealed, some registered as samples of no valour, others as postal-parcels, seemed to greatly puzzle the postal officers, After a little the strange mystery was revealed, by ope-

ning eight or ten of them, as they were not well closed nor well sealed. These singular little boxes contained ashes from Vesuvius. More than four-thousand boxes of Vesuvian dust have gone and are still going. Irony of things!

These little boxes are sent as a strange and rare thing, to the farthest parts of the world, even to Australia, that the people from every part of the world, may see the Vesuvius ashes fallen over Naples. Till Australia! But especially to England and America: And by investigating the matter it has been seen that nearly all those who had shipped the boxes were foreigners. Which means that all the foreigners passing through here or established in Naples, or who had come here to see the eruption had immediately thought of gathering this dust, put it in little boxes, and send

it to their relations, friends, lovers, and flirts. And this has been one of the most interesting points of this sad period: it has been a proof of the coldblood of these foreigners who in a conflagration like this see but the curious side of things. Four-thousand little boxes and perhaps more! And we here, feel sad and oppressed by these cinders burying us! How much better it would have been if the little boxes instead of four thousand had been forty thousand! it might have been the means of lessening this danger.

April 1906.



A WOMAN



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Monday April 9

This has been one of the worst and saddest of the five days of tragic anguish of things, and men. I reached Somma Vesuviana at half past three, and the automobile which was carrying me, was obliged to stop quite outside the town closed, and over-powered as it was by the new strata of dust and lappillus. Then with the companions of this sad but dutiful excursion we have gone on on foot, sinking so deeply at every step, that fatigue seemed and was almost unbearable.

ble. — Few people peeped out of the doors of their country houses, nearly all covered and hidden under the ashes and lappillus, and spoke of two towns not very near, but not far, quite destroyed; S. Giuseppe and Ottaiano. These people told us of the dead of the many dead and wounded that were there and insisted before our incredulity. We thought that those poor peasants lied or exaggerated, we did not really believe it, but we hoped it! But alas! they were right and nothing of all that had happened there had been known, till the morning in Naples, and we ourselves, had climbed the sad calvary, only through vague presentiment of misfortune. It was quite true that more than three-hundred people lay dead between Ottaiano and S. Giuseppe. We walked dumb and trembling with deep sorrow,



among stones and lappillus stopping now and then as if exhausted. An automobile had stopped in the midst of Somma Vesuviana, it had found it impossible to proceed, and was guarded by a chauffeur only. Two brave carabineers roamed sadly about, and when, we asked them who the automobile was, I was informed it belonged to the Duchess of Aosta, who having taken her leave from their Majesties about twelve o'clock, had gone up to Somma Vesuviana a little after mid-day. Not having been able to proceed towards Ottaiano either by the automobile or by carriage or horses since there were none to be had, and quite decided to reach Ottaiano, she had started on foot, on a road buried under ashes and lappillus, a road, which in ordinary times can be run over in two hours, and over which she had

walked at least for four painful ones. Calm and resolute she had not hesitated a moment to undertake that difficult walk, but had gone through the whole way in a simple and silent manner reaching Ottaiano all alone on monday 9<sup>th</sup> of April, where pale with emotion she had witnessed the umburying of the first fifty dead. Then she had given all her cares and attendance to each of the bodies, with her own charitable hands with her kind and sweet words, with the tenderest encouragement to the most unfortunate.

And till sun-set in that terrible day in which all the horror of the conflagration seemed worst, since the catastrophe of Pompei seemed to be renewed in Ottaiano and in S. Giuseppe, there among the dead and the wounded stood the Duchess of Aosta helping the work

of the doctors, giving orders, and providing for all. And when night fell covering so many funestous things, she got up on a horse, a simple carabinieri's horse and sinking deep in rocks, and stones she reached at night Somma Vesuviana and returned to the Royal house of Capodimonte, letting nobody know what her day and her work had been.



I relate this fact in its high simplicity since it does not only testify to the goodness of this woman but to her incomparable moral valour, since it is not only an act of charity, but from a woman, from a lady, from a princess it is an act

of heroism And of these deeds Elena of Aosta the daughter of the king of France, has accomplished a great many every day in this terrible week. She has gone a-pl about the places where it is difficult and dangerous to go, in every place worthy of a great soul and fibre like hers is; where men, and especially men, have been afraid to go, she has gone bravely several times where need was most urgent, and where storm seemed stronger, there she has gone: and every where her steps, have been usefully taken, her vivid strength has been used for the good, her hands have helped and consoled, her will has accomplished miracles. And do you know in what manner? Without official notices, without any pomp, without anybody knowing it, almost as if in secrecy. Often people have not known her, and many don't

know now that she, who has quenched the thirst and hunger of so many, she who has helped the dying in the ruins and fire, is the descendent of S. Louis.

She has hidden herself when meeting people who could notice her, she has always worn modest and dark clothes, and her face has been hidden by veils, and she has withdrawn when frivolous and curious people have tried to observe her doings. This noble woman has not found any rest before this terrible misfortune of ours, and her work has been a high spiritual beauty, and the modesty and silence with which she has surrounded herself has been really sublime. And I stamp here her moral image with humble admiration and proud to know she is a woman as I am; and I am happy not to have to write down only in the daily news

the Duchess of Aosta wore on her white satin waist a magnificent emerald pin; I am happy that a feminine soul in a vigorous fibre should show the world what is the power of virtue in a woman and in a christian. And for all those whom she has comforted really, in the terrible hour not caring herself for dangers and un comforts, for all the wounded and agonizing ones, for all those who weep, and were consoled by her, I implore on her all God's blessings and may her life be sowed with all goods, and may her children be blessed through her.

LET THE GUILTY ONES  
BE PUNISHED





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The night before Easter has been full of fright and confusion for the people already prostrated by so many emotions.

This ringing of telephones, this continued and sudden ringing, in the depth of night, repeated every where, in military offices, government offices, newspaper offices, this anxious running to the thelephones, this news given with trembling voice, these brief dialogues sometimes impetuous, sometimes sad, have been, and still are an incubus on us all, from the general to the reporter,

from the Prefect to the municipal usher, from the director of a railway station to the firemen! Indeed, this ringing which makes our nerves thrill in the most painful way, the exhausted nerves of all those who have been obliged to suffer for the last ten days, and think, and act, in the mean time, this terrible, continued noise has not permitted us to sleep in this night before Easter. We all have been the victims of a deathly joke, invented by a man who, mad with terror, has made himself guilty of the lowest of deeds.

But obeying to our rigorous duty as publishers, also in this night before Easter, and in this very Easter morning we have given, in a very brief and simple form, without clamour or exaggeration, without lugubrious inventions, the news which the idleness of this M. Fedele

had changed in a tolling of bells, and in a breath of death, It is natural that Prefects, under Prefects, Commissaries of Prefecture, should have been more than concerned, and that at head quarters they should have kept watch all night, giving orders on all the line, awakening every body, and mobilitating every thing. Has not our M. Fedele spread terror every where? Later on in that same. Easter morning, while our hearts rejoicing, especially this year when the day had brought peace and resurrection, every body was suddenly saddened by the spreading of this false news, not given by us, but thrown among us in the most emphatic and cruel way, spreading sorrow in the hardly revived spirits of the people, announcing that there were dead and wounded, even among the officers and the soldiers.

Oh! poor mothers of officers and soldiers near and far away, you must have been the first to get the sad news, this low lying news, and your poor heart must have been broken before you were able to know that this news it was false.



If an example is not given, if cowardice, lying, and foolishness are not punished, life will become even more difficult and complicated than it is for all those who have duties and responsibilities, and for the mass of citizens who need to rebuild for themselves a quiet and laborious life.

We want to know who must do it, whether this M. Fedele has been or has not been punished, he who has not only

deserted his place, but who has upset this whole region through his fright? Will he be punished? Will all those functioners, who believed this foolish news, and have called for help before knowing the truth, will they be called and invited to show some courage, some cold blood, and equilibrium? As for the Agenzia Stefani which has covered itself with ridicule during all the period of the eruption, telegraphing all over the world, that the 'Vesuvian Observatory had been destroyed, while the news was false, and which has been obliged to contradict the news that it had given half an hour before, it has already been justly and severely upbraided and censured by our Prefect who will write to Rome to the central Government, that the director may be called, and an investigation made. Let the culprits be punished,

and let none of them have the chance to escape, or to invent any thing more. Let nobody throw panic among those who have duties to fulfil in these sad and trying moments.

Let nobody start panic in Naples, in this city which must revive and begin again its work and energy. If a whole city like ours, a whole region, a whole population, from a prince of the House of Savoia to the humblest of soldiers must fall at the mercy of a frightened panic-stricken man, of an official whose business is to be forever mistaken, we would like to know if such absurd thing must be tolerated, if such thing has to continue. Let all those who have any fault in the panic of last night, be punished, and let military power interfere where it must, and government one where it wants and can, provided

this dangerous and annoying scandal should not be repeated.

Let the Neapolitan public, the great punisher, act as it knows how to act when needed, and let it severely punish those newspapers that have printed false news exaggerating ruin and death.





LET THE LAND BE SAVED



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For the present every thing is satisfactory. The Government could not, and cannot do more or better than it has done, to organise ready help through all the vast zone of the Vesuvian country stricken by this dreadful conflagration. The life of one hundred and fifty thousand people running away, has been guarded and protected with energy and wisdom, and the deserted towns, those less damaged, have been in the quickest possible way set again to their own normal life. The streets quite destroyed have been rebuilt, at least in those

parts where circulation is more necessary, and with the return of the many fugitives to the towns where the dreadful shower was worse, they have managed to start again a life, abnormal perhaps, but at least a life. You need only go over this long, fatiguing, hard pilgrimage, in these countries stricken by the terrible disaster, to realize the extraordinary new start to life, the work of reparation, the rebuilding of everything, where nothing more had been left. All has been made anew, from the bread for the famished, to the medical assistance to the sick, from the first work in removing cinders and lappillus, to the building of wooden barracks, from the trains already running through the high piles of rocks, to the tearing down of tumbling roofs, from the free dinners distributed all around, to the Serino water brought

here from Naples every day. All has sprung to a new life. To say who has done all this is easy: The Government has had this simple, happy idea. It has trusted two men of intelligence, two men of will, the Duke of Aosta and General Tarditi; it has put its trust in the obedience, abnegation, heroism of the chiefs and of the soldiers; it has added to this sane, serious, and practical civil element, and has given much money, it has adhered to all requests, it has answered to all demands. Ready help is active, there where life is. How long will all this last? And can it last? And must it last? The salvation of to day is done! Man has saved man! Those who had power, intellect, good will, ardor, enthousiasm have given it all! The history of these days will remain memorable in the

pages of human help! And I would like to have the vigour and the time to write it up myself, as an homage to the ideal which binds men. But what, and who will save to-morrow man and his house, man and his descendance, man and his bread, man and his field?

Who and what will create a new life firm, continued, of constant evolution?

One is the secret: this country must be saved. Oh men! who are tenderly concerned over the despair of nearly ten thousand people, oh! men of heart and mind, give, give food to all these imfortunate beings, to these poor people who have nothing to do, to the women, to the old people, to the children! Alas! you will not be able to do it always! Build, rebuild roofs and hearths that they may find a shelter, but the house will perhaps be empty,

and the hearth fireless. Have the streets cleared free from the rocks, lapillus, and cinders which the fury of the vulcano has brought down, but these streets will be deserted and sad. Reform the social life with its laws and regulations, but all that will be a dead letter. Ah! all is useless if the country is not saved. The land which gives bread and fire, the land which gives life must be saved in all its region so terribly damaged. This land alone knows the secret of its resurrection. Save the land, you men of good will. Save it in all its modest and imposing forms: save the little orchard, and the small tract, the garden, the humble edge which closes the large field, save the land of the poor farmer, of the modest peasant, of the small land-owner, fertile or sterile as it may be. Modest peasant, save the land,

no matter how it is, rich or poor; the land is always the land, the spring of life, the earth which is flour, vegetables, the earth which is life itself! From the miserable little grass, to the highest of trees, the earth which enriches man, warms him up, lights up his nights. The earth which gives food to the tired limbs, wood to the hearth, oil to the lamp. Save this land! You cannot help these people beyond a certain length of time, your money would not be enough, your charitable impulse would not last, and of these charities people, after all, will get tired. And so it will be, for the necessity of human conscience, for the dignity of man, even if marked by misfortune.

No alms any longer, but some means by which everybody may rise again, take up again his modest and laborious



round of existence, support himself and his family, and close every day, with a blessing to God. Some means by which he may end his mortal pilgrimage having accomplished his work among men, as a worker, and head of a family. Save the earth, save the wheat and the vine, the oil and the oak, save every inch of land around the silent country homes. Save the land which slopes down over the cruel and fatal mountain, just as that, farther off, which cannot fear its tragic explosion. Ah, those poor lands ascending up to S. Anastasia all covered and buried, but still trying to emerge, those poor country lands around beautiful Somma Vesuviana cut out of existence, smothered and gone! Ah! that silent and deserted grave which is now the country between Somma and Ottaiano, dead, under half a meter

of stones and cinders, everything dead, the grass, the plants, the bushes, the trees! Who will forget, who will ever forget that incomparable vision of death?

Call men of science, those who study science to better life, and tell them to get together, to observe, to notice, to reveal to the ignorant the secret to save this dead land. Call men of finances, not those who understand it as a mere dance of cyphers, but those who know what it means to life, and let them form a great project, by which the land may be saved.

Money will come, people are already giving it, and more will still be given, especially if people know that it is not only used for charities but for the redemption of work, not only used for provisory help, but for a larger, wiser, and more austere aid.

The Government will give now or later all that is necessary, and perhaps beyond what is necessary. Form a great, serious practical project, based on strong views, an agrary and financial project, which may teach, guide, advise. Give little or much money, as needed or where it is needed, in order that every farmer may get back his little tract of land, that every peasant may rebuild his field, and every owner may redeem his property.

Give your advice and take the easiest means to have it fulfilled. Let money be given, not lent to he who has cleared and redeemed his field. If the money has to be lent, let it be on long time, and let the Government pay a strong part of the interest on the agrary loan, just as was done at the time of the earthquake in Liguria. Let

the cheapest and most efficacious advice be given, that every man may start with his own hands and the help of his people, to free his land from its funeral shroud, and let help be given as a prize to will, and tenacity. Let it be a civil help to honest citizen, that their small destroyed fortune may be rebuilt for their children. This, at least, you must do, men of good will.

Let all the land around be delivered from the heavy mantle which wraps and smothers it, let it be free, and from one season to another, let the grass, plants, trees, flowers and fruits grow up again.

May the waving crops spring up again, in the devastated fields, and the olive and vines grow there anew. May the amond tree bloom once more with red flowers there where the storm has passed, lea-

ving death behind. Oh men of good will if you will know how to do this, you will have saved your country, and in renewing life where death has reigned, you will have come as near to God as anybody ever did before.

· April 21 1906.



EVERY DAY HAS ITS MORROW





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It is not certainly through cold blooded and cruel newspaper work, that I, with some strong and faithful collaborators of the « *Giorno* » have gone in the places which have been more severely stricken by the furies of Vesuvius; nor have I gone there through any stupid and vain curiosity. We had all gone before, when the tremendous eruption was at its worst and we went trembling with anxiety and we saw and felt all the horror of that storm in its terrific aspect. We returned home every evening, every night in a real convulsion of anguish. Every

day has its morrow, and to a period of great emotion, when all your soul rebels and rises against a misfortune which nothing can fight, another long and slow period follows, full of mortal sadness. The period of the morrow of a catastrophe when your spirit calmed down, and clear in its sadness, measures silently all the damage that people and things have suffered.

For the journalistic sportman, Ottaiano, S. Giuseppe, Boscotrecase, Torre Annunziata, Somma Vesuviana don't hold now any more the necessary interest to suggest terrorising news, nor does the frivolous curiosity of the frivolous reader find any interest in these exhausted subjects. But for me every day has its morrow, and, so it is for all those who have a heart, who feel to be citizens of a great country ra-

ther than newspaper men; who feel the voice of their conscience before that of their fancy. Every day has its morrow and it is this morrow that we sadly and simply have gone to seek there where the ruins of country and villages have been left. Another sentiment has urged me and the other pilgrims of this humble duty, the thought that now, little by little, the violent crisis being calmed down and passed, people may forget all this great trouble! We are so willingly careless here when deep sorrow has passed, and the sun shines on human misfortunes. We forget so easily the pains and troubles of others, when the pang of their sorrow is ended. But we should not forget; we must not stop having pity, we must not stop giving our cares and help, we must continue! So we have gone every whe-

re it seemed necessary, stopping first at Ottaiano, and we have seen and inquired of the people, and things have told us their secret.

April 22 1906.

# THE NEW POMPEI



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Between two edges of lapillus which have formed on the right and left of the rails, among mountains of ashes accumulated here and there in order to free the way, that the trains might get as far as Ottaiano, the little station is crowded with different and strange people. Here are dark faced peasants, silently advancing from the villages where they have been sheltered, and now looking for the little home which once was theirs. Civil functioneers who come here perhaps to try and, doubtless in vain, to rebuild some kind of social

life among the ruins of this new Pompei. Small proprietors have climbed up here just through that sad curiosity some people, seem to feel who know they are ruined: rich proprietors of lands and houses, who come to calculate how much of their fortunes has been lost, and consider whether it is worth the while to fight for the future; some weeping woman of the people, a few but rare ladies who have come through a spirit of charity. Many soldiers, many officers, all covered with dust, and not brilliant looking certainly, but fulfilling the most constant and patient duty, a duty always greater and more complex. Here is their general in the midst of a group of persons, who draw close to him, wishing for something, (every body wishes for something), and general Durelli has an answer for everyone, a



brief but kind answer. He has a word for everybody, and promises only what he can keep. He is the soul, the breath, the mind, of this new Pompei. I know all this, and I simply bow to him, as I don't want to make him loose any of his precious time. But later when all interrogatories, with every distinguished or obscure person, peasants, gentlemen, poor traders or proprietors of Ottaiano is over, every one declares to me that in this incomparable trouble, in this ruination of the prettiest of towns, the choice of general Durelli, as a riorganiser, could not be better. He occupies one of the few standing houses left inhabited by the parson, and he sleeps there a few hours, and takes his meals, but he is always on his feet, always around, plunging his high boots deep in a meter of lapillus, going to and fro, watching

every thing, providing promptly to all with clear and efficacious orders. Around him, groups of bare-footed women, with half naked children in their arms, push and press, while new people coming from the different main roads, arrive, urging him with demands and requests. The women, especially the poorest of them, with sad looking faces relate to him their misfortune, and general Durelli always kind and patient tries to console them and give them what they ask. He begs them to be quiet and wait, hoping for better times.

They draw slowly away, sitting in groups on the ground or on the accumulated ashes, forming thus a strange and never to be forgotten picture. Their clothes are gray with ashes and dust, whilst their babies with smutty faces and hair, lay quietly in their arms, watching

eagerly around. They wait there in silence. Perhaps better hours will come.

#### UNDER THE NATIVE ROOF.

In the long, hard fatiguing pilgrimage where every step costs untold pain, where every look sees a precipice, a young peasant accompanies us as a guide.

One reads trouble and misery in his dark eyes, his voice is low and dragging, almost complaining.

Are you from Ottaiano, I ask him, while going up the steep road.

— Yes, I and my family are from that place.

— Did you run away from there in that terrible night?

— Yes, we fled just about dawn

when the fall of stones was at its worst.

— And how long did this last?

— Fully twenty four hours madam, from ten o'clock on Saturday night, till ten o'clock on Palm Sunday.

A whole day, yes, a whole day. He does'nt lie nor exaggerate. If he did, how could all this ruin be around us?

— Did your house fall down? I inquire.

— Yes, he answers sadly. There it stands on that height yonder. Look at it! look at it! All I possessed is buried there! My bed, my poor furniture, all.

Tears gather in his eyes. At least have you saved your family?

— Yes, he murmurs, they are at Sarno. But I have lost all. I was supporting them, and have lost my wagon and my two mules, for I was a driver.

— Are they buried?

— The wagon can be seen under the stones; and as he speaks he seems to take heart all at once, It can be seen! perhaps I shall be able to drag it out. But the mules! The mules are dead. How shall I manage?

A deep sigh heaves his broad chest.

- And you have come back here, I ask him? Many of you have come back?

— I have come back. This is my country. I have come to try to save my wagon and those poor animals, Nothing, nothing!

— Will you remain here?

— I shall! Where could I go? This is my country. I will also make my family return from Sarno. If you knew how many have returned!

— How many? How many?

— At least three thousand. Many

have come back the following day. You see, we could not stay away.

— And where do they live?

— Nearly all sleep out in the fields under straw sheds, and the others in the few houses that remain standing now.

They are building cabins, and little by little you will see every body, coming back to their own country.

— Was this place, fine? I ask him quite touched.

— The finest of all, and our country is fine!

And he utters these words enthusiastically, but again he looks down sighing, and is silent.

## AMONG THE RUINS.

Of course the farther we get from the station, from Municipio square, the fewer people we see, and the more we advance towards Scudieri's house, Ateneo Chierchia, and the feudal palace of Ottaiano, where the ruins take a more imposing and solemn aspect, the greater the solitude.

But while we stop at every step, to look from the top of the mountains of stones and ashes, on which we climb and descend, while we look at the piled up ceilings, shutters, stones, furniture, pictures, and utensils all in demolition, now and then, we see somebody coming out of a small lane closed by a small gate. Here is an old woman, she looks to be seventy

years old, she is thin, wrinkled, but quite straight. I speak to her, I ask her all about that dreadful night.

— I was sleeping, madam, I was sleeping. I woke up and heard screams: «The mountain, the mountain!» Who could believe that a disaster was on us? What was there to be done? I turn entreating God, but I see death coming. My lady! What noise, what darkness, what flashes! The door could not be opened. I just jumped out of the window.

— Out of the window? at your age?

— The window was low and I fell on the ashes. I began to run madly, I don't know where. I protected my head with my arm! Look how wounded it is by a stone falling on me!

And she shows me her fore-arm. It has a long wound, a torn place which is beginning to heal.



— And where did you go ?

— Where could I go ? Old as I am ?  
In the country towards Somma; there I  
spent the night. I said, this is the hour  
of my death ! Let your will be done my  
Lord !

— And you have come back ?

— I have come back. What could I  
do in another country ? Who wants an  
old woman ? If I have to die, I want to  
die here.

Here is a man of the people coming  
from a street. He bends over a mattress  
tucks it up and lays it on a cart which  
is in a corner, where he has already  
laid other things.

— Have you found your things again ?  
I ask him ?

— I have found some of them, he tells  
me readily, with a rather excited tone. I  
am taking these things to Sarno where

my wife and children are. They have no place where to sleep. But I am coming back at once. I am a man, I can work. I am coming back day after to-morrow. I want to work here.

— And what will you do?

— What they' ll give me to do. Have you seen all those men on the square? They are not from Ottaiano, they are from Marigliano, Pomigliano, and other countries, all people coming here to seek work. They take away the stones and cinders, and ask a great amount of money. Well, this must be done by us, from Ottaiano. Also gratis, even if they dont give us for it but the soldiers, ranch.

The country is ours, the trouble is ours, we must repair it. And he ties with a rope his few things, loads them on the cart with a firm and decided air.

## THE BABIES

Speaking with people, I find that the most touching episodes are those concerning the babies.

How heart-rending the cry and screams must have been of the parents and relatives who were trying to gather them, that they might take them away, lifting in their arms the youngest, tying to their clothes the largest, what a tearing cry must have been heard under the terrible shower of burning stones, lappillus, and ashes! Many of these children, got lost through the country in that dark night, their parents, not finding them, but after three days at long distances, while for three days, they believed them dead and wept desperately over them! The boarders of Ateneo Chierchia ran out

helping the younger ones, and carried them on their shoulders wrapped in blankets that they might not be wounded, and in these conditions they fled through the terrible night. The soldiers who had come from Nola during the day gathered a number of other children, and fed them, keeping them with them till the following days, when they could be returned to their parents. As for mothers, in that terrible flight, half wild with despair, they wrapped the little ones in their dresses and shawls thus repairing them from certain death. A poor lady, who had a four months old baby, hid it under her arms, covered it with a basket, and thus carried it for eleven miles, on foot, at night, the baby however quietly sleeping under its shelter. The children of one of the teachers in Ottaiano, took their father

who was very ill, closed him in a kind of covered box, and carried him so, on their shoulders till Caserta. The poor man naturally died there of his former trouble, but his children can say that they have saved him from dying under the stones of Ottaiano. Strange to say in this flight of fourteen thousand persons, not one single baby has died, and the people from Ottaiano say, that this is a miracle of the Madonna, a true, real miracle, and every mother clasping her child alive in her arms, has been obliged to believe in this miracle.

#### A WITNESS.

From the ruins of his beautiful house, from the flowered terrace, covered for

one meter with vulcanic stones and cinders, comes Luigi Scudieri, a friend of ours, a witness of the great cataclism. His gay and open expression has not changed, his family is saved, all of them, from his old parents to his children. The palaces of his noble and powerful family have tumbled down one after the other and their rich fabrics, their vast territories are now buried, for many, many years perhaps. Their fortune is compromised, yet he is back here since four or five days, back in Ottaiano, actively busying himself around, advising, guiding, comforting the more desolate, the desperate, helping every one, speaking to every body.

Of course I ask him to tell me all about the destruction of Ottaiano, but notwithstanding his natural brightness,

he gets confused and troubled while he speaks.

— Dear Donna Matilde, in the first hours of Saturday night, I must confess, we were not much preoccupied. As you know, we have had several showers of cinders here in Ottaiano, but they were short and harmless. Nothing was to be feared, that evening, as I tell you, but towards mid-night the preoccupation began. The crater had fallen in, and at every breath of the Vulcano, a more and more increasing fall of ashes came down, passing over the mountain of Somma which protects us, and striking the whole of our place. The alarm bells began to ring.

— How terrible! I exclaim.

— It was well they rang the bells he says. The peasants who had all returned

home for the holy week, were all fast asleep, the women at the sound of the bells, came out from their houses, running madly away, and to be sure many more would have died had the bells not rung.

— How many died here in Ottaiano?

— About seventy, and even those might have been saved, but the night was so dark and the fall of ashes so thick.

— Did they all seem to lose their mind?

— In the beginning no! I telegraphed to Naples, and the poor telegraph operator who sent my telegram, and whose courage and devotion should be enhanced, sent these telegrams under the flashes of the mountain.

Twice the electric shocks threw her down. One only of my three wires, the



one to the Military Comand reached its destination.

— And your family, I ask?

He seems moved and hesitating.

— "Dont speak to me about that, he exclaims, those hours have been terrible ! When I saw that we had to run away, I was obliged to nearly carry my wife who was ill and weak, on the road. Quite exhausted and discouraged , she stopped to recomend me the children, asking me to let her die there in that very place. I knew nothing about my father and mother; my nephews have saved them, they had sworn to die but to save their grand parents, these brave boys. Only after four days I learned that all my people were saved.

— And where did they all go?

— To Avellino ! One would hardly believe it! we reached Avellino by an

extra train, and there we received from all the population, and principally from good Achille Vetroni, a warm hospitality.

Yon can tell it to every body in honour of Vetroni and Avellino. Imagine that in the shops, they refused to be paid, when we went to buy shoes and boots.

Yes, they have really done prodigies of devotion and kindness.

Prodigies! Tell every body what the hospitality of Sarno has been for the people from Ottaiano, how touching! You must also add that the first good example, came from the seminary. The good rector has promptly given up his room to M. Cola, who was flying from Ottaiano, quite ill. The seminarists have distributed their own clothes to the people. One can hardly realize all that has been done for the people of Ot-

taiano everywhere they have gone, to Sarno, Caserta, Castellammare, Mari-gliano and Nola. We shall never forget it.

— And what will you do now? I ask him after a brief silence.

— With what? he asks me.

— With Ottaiano.

— Rebuild it all, he answers me, quietly.

Rebuild it all?

— And what else can we do? We are fourteen thousand. Four thousand have already returned. Where do you want us to go? To Turin? To Milan? It is not possible. Don't you see? Settle in the neighbourhood? At Portici! at Torre Annunziata? We shall always be under the Vesuvius, consequently, in constant danger. Better remain where we are.

But the houses have tumbled down.  
What then?

The roofs yes, but the walls are not cracked.

We shall have to build the new houses with arched small iron wants little by little! you will all help us, won't you? How can one abandon one's own country? Here all of us possess much or little land, will you take from us also the hope of redeeming it for our children? What would become of us in Milan, Turin, even in Naples?

How could we hope to build up again, if we went away? But we shall need much help... I say... You all must unite with us. And we shall work, and we shall have to make the poor peasants work, and give them prizes for their work, and no alms nor any kind of charity.

Life and hope are still strong in this

man who has seen death near him and his people, who has seen his village tumble down, and who is now speaking only of its resurrection.

### VINCENZA ARPAIA

Here near us a woman is speaking eagerly. She is of the peasant type, but a light of intelligence shines in her eyes, and while talking she mixes correct Italian words with her dialect. She has a handkerchief tied on her head, the image of a Saint hangs down on her breast, and she discusses vivaciously.

I interrogate her. I know she has come back here the day after that frightful shower, and has not moved from here ever since. She counts up

the houses that are still standing, she speaks of those who have returned and will return. And I learn, that she is the mid-wife of the village, Vincenza Arpaia.

— Have you your diplome, Vincenza, I ask her?

— Of course! I received it at the University of Naples. and I was appointed to this place, she exclaims with pride. Not a single baby is born here, without my assistance.

— All alive!

— All, madam! And thank to the Lord there are no orphans. What a destruction! But now it is finished, and it will take more than a hundred years before it happens again. — She refers to the terrible fall of stones at Ottaiano, in 1789, she is rather informed, yet she preserves her popular simplicity.

— And why did you return so soon, Vincenza?

— To attend to my work, and see after new born babies, madam.

— New born babies? here?

— One was born the other day, she cries gaily! A fine boy! He was born on the ruins and I shall take him to S. Giovanni, to the only church still standing, and all the bells must be ringing!

This woman of the people says now unconsciously a great and deep thing. A baby was born on the ruins! Oh! eternal resurrection of life!

Oh baby! You are a symbol! life never ends! it renews itself, and it is the eternal bloom of strength and beauty.

April 22 1906.





IGNIS ARDENS



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When coming out from the station of the Circumvesuviana at Torre Annunziata, as one goes towards the white and flowery cemetery, which was reported destroyed, but fortunately has not been touched by the fire, one suddenly sees, quite in front of the gate, at seven or eight meters from the wall on the left, a large barrier of black or dark gray stones, and pitch coloured rocks, a rocky irregular barrier closing at a certain distance the restful home of the dead, and one wonders: Is this the lava?

Yes, that is the lava. Still, asleep, and dead, it rests now under the sun, having already become a harmless thing, transformed in an arid rocky wall, in a mound of ruins, gathered there in confusion, for an illimited extension, and going down in an easy slope, like a stair of stones. That is the lava, and who sees it for the first time, must ask himself if, in that accumulation of still things, in that ocean of fused bronze, life has existed, if that mass has not been deposited there by chance, by the untiring arm of gigantic cyclops, and not by its own strength, by its powerful and ardent life of fire. And one smiles almost incredulously, as one would, before a made up spectacle. One would like to tread over those scories, strike them with one's own stick and show them all the contempt that natu-

rally springs from one's souls towards a stone. Stone? Oh no! from the cracks cutting here and there, immense columns of white smoke, tinted with yellow vapours, arise.... and if you look more intensely you perceive many, many more. It is like an immense lighted field, spread all over with smoke, similar to an early dawn in the month of November. That stone is still living. Under those masses, fire is still burning. The blood of the Vulcano beats yet in those stony veins.

The terrible thing appears to you then, in all its majestic and frightful grandeur, always burning like the flame of the Vestals. And you understand then more clearly what must have been the terrible spectacle of this slow fall of living and destructive strength advancing little by little, gaining inch by inch the

fields and the houses, this invincible strength carrying flames and destruction in its breast, hearing no control, going where it pleased with the caprice of a perverted will and bringing desolation and death every where it has touched. You will well understand, what this rolling red river must have been in the fatal night, with the black sky shrowded with sun, crowned with lightnings like a revengeful divinity, this slow and voracious river, which has swallowed up half a country. You will well understand, how a picturesque little village can have been destroyed in its rich lands, in one of its fractions, in its first houses.

A nice white little village, blocated by a black row of stone girdling it with mourning after having wrapped it with destruction, and you will then understand what must have been the panic and

terror of yesterday, and what is to day the serious loss of this place which is now hardly spoken of, and which to-morrow will be probably forgotten: of Boscotreccase prisoner of fire, like Brunhilde of the Walkirian stry and which will never be waked up again from her sleep ressembling death.

If you want to go to Boscotreccase, from the cemetery of Torre Annunziata, you may, avoiding to go down as far as Scafati, ascend directly the course of the lava and coasting as I have done, three steps further you see the line of the Circumvesuviana cut for several meters by the lava, which has run over the rails, falling on the ground underneath, rails being raised in that place.

Let us go through the fields, the front

of the lava is quite wide and one must take a long turn.

All around the black sleeping mass, the country has remained untouched, the vines are in bloom and young green twigs hang from them. One step from the last scories, advanced sentinels of death, little field daisies, all gold, small stars wreathing the head of the monster, are waving at the soft, light blowing breeze, while big bloody poppies like large stains of blood, fill the ground all around.

Half way up over the low walls of the farms, a little house appears at once before you. It is the first one which has been surrounded by the lava. In fact the walls peep out of the crags under the rocks where they are buried. All is in its place, not a shingle is missing



from the roof, not a pane from the windows. Only the inesorable lava closes it all around.

And I have like the painful sensation of witnessing the agony of a healthy and good creature, hugged in the arms of a giant who is slowly suffocating it. Still more houses are to be seen farther on; but some of them are in ruin, the lava has leant against the walls, has pressed, has broken some pillars and has opened big cracks in the walls. From a close window, I suddenly perceive, a thin line of grayish smoke.

The work of the hidden fire is only beginning.

The house is burning little by little. The shutters, the doors, all wooden things in contact with the lava, are beginning to burn, then it will be the turn of the beams, of the sustaining

arches and the walls; every thing will be consumed to ashes, and only some ruins will remain.

How long will it take? Who knows? The work of fire is silent and tenacious like a human vengeance. After an hour's march we abandon the poor, deserted dwellings, irremessibly condemned, vowed to death, younder in the great sea of lava, and we get back in the main road, full of dust, leading to Boscotrecase.

### AT BOSCOTRECASE

Entering the little town one receives the impression that nothing abnormal has happened there.

Truly few people are circulating in the streets, the shops are open, women are

standing at the doors of their houses, sewing, chattering, while streams of children play in the sun. We go about the street which bears the name of Cardinal Prisco. It is extremely quiet, almost asleep in the meridian hours and we get to the Oratorio.

At the end of the road, between two houses we are surprised to see a kind of fence made of wood and beams, in the shape of a cross. Is it a barricade? No it is the barrier! On the other side there is lava.

There it is, in fact, the black enemy, there in the village, running between two wings of houses, sneaking in a little lane, there it lies dead without the strength to go any farther.

And this is only a little stream, but at a short distance, what vast and imposing river. All the Oratorio square is

invaded and submerged. It is like a row of stormy waves, petrified as by a strange prodigy, standing erect among the edifices. Here, and there on the crest, a soldier; a sentinel appears. The image of S. Anna, the patron of the place has been taken elsewhere to a house on the ground floor, in Oratorio street, and the opened windows look like empty, while the bells hang in a silence which will have no end. I turn to another side, through a path the soldiers are opening. I pass between two lines of infantry diggers, small creatures curved on the stones, in an audacious and patient work.

They look and smile under the shade of their straw hats, and start again to work.

How many days have they been there?

How long will they still remain? Who knows? They themselves dont know it. And they bend on the fatiguing and tenacious, work like brave boys asking nothing for themselves, and they give all their, fatigue, strength, youth, happy in the hard striking of their pics, in the hard digging of their hoe, singing softly the ritornelli, of their native songs as if they were in their native villages beyond the mountains working in the corn fields or among the vines.

#### THE LAVA IN THE TOUR

This large tract of Lava which thanks to the works of repair can be crossed in a carriage, has cut the town in two. From this point the streets begin again to be quiet and the houses to be inha-

bited, normal life seems to reign every where.

Hery is Citarella street, here is Gior-dano street with its green orchards, and the dogs sleeping on the thresholds of the houses, and the old people bathing in the sun. But suddenly another branch of lava is standing in front of you, it is the one that has invaded the other side of the Oratorio cutting the communication with Tre Case.

It has sneaked in the town, getting in the lanes, through the orchards, assaulting the houses from behind, reversing itself from the ground-floors against which the wave has struck. I see a house completely surrounded and taken by the lava, quite in front of Pagliarella street, it is the house of a certain Giuseppe Principini. The first floor has fallen in, the lava has penetrated through a window

at the shoulders of the house, it has invaded the first room, it has filled the second, it has made the floor fall in, and has then reversed itself down in a cascade which has remained petrified, looking almost like a fantastic bridge of black scories, gracefully modelled on bronze. Another little room near is full of lava up to the windows. Among the black masses, a little twisted serpent peeps out. It is all that remains of a bedstead. The wall near the house is dry, the water has evaporated, before the fire touched it.

#### THE SEA OF LAVA

On the three first high steps of the branch of lava which runs to Tre Case, I met engineer Pasquale Acunzo a tecni-

cal engineer. He has been at his place untiringly, from the first moment of the danger, directing the work of dikes when the lava was coming down, and now he directs the construction of the street which must unite Boscotrecase to its nearest centers. All our communications with Torre Annunziata and Tre Case are cut off; it is the death of the country. The only road that remains open to us, is the long and rough one to Scafati. Engineer Acunzo accompanies us up the steep way, on the lava. M. Luigi Casella, worthy mayor of Boscotrecase, joins us. He has been one of the bravest and busiest in this sad fight, and has given himself entirely to the saving of his country, uncaring of himself, of his goods, of his houses which he has lost, all buried under the lava. The front part of the lava is



getting higher and higher. From its brief starting point, it touches already the first floor of a house. We walk near the balconies, with their bannisters split, all bent outside as if a gigantic hand had twisted them. Working men belonging to the Genio Civile, are working hard to carry away all that can be saved, to demolish what is in danger, and to prop up the rest. Gushes of suffocating smoke, come out from the cracks. Here also the silent work of fire has begun. All around the temperature is very high: it feels as if one was near the mouth of an oven.

All at once, here we are on the large spreaded lavas, opening wide and free as far as the skirts of the mountain. It is a sea, rough and upset, a race of points, pics, crests, a chain of small hills as far as the eye can reach. The

sun snatches from that sea reflections of bronze which become more and more opaque with the drawing back of the wave up the mountain.

Further it blends itself in a grayish and uniform stratus. Here and there dense smoke comes out from the cracks it is like the burning of copious incense to an unknown God, a God of terror and destruction. Now and then small houses are seen. Here is a half tumbled down palace, the panes of the windows are all pierced with holes it is the home of M. Bifulco. Here is a part of a ruined wall, it is the little church that Bernardo Tanucci has built in remembrance of another eruption. And other houses, and other ruins, and everything buried under the great infinite sea, scottered everything. But as a contrast, if you look down, the slope at the left, there beyond the

stretch of green orchards, behind the white girdles of the houses, far, away, at the end there is the sea ample and serene, bathed in a soft, sapphire colour just as in an April day. The sea shining as a hope, in front of the ruins of a country, which has no other comfort but to hope.

#### THE VERY SERIOUS DAMAGES

It is urgent to provide.

The damages of Boscotrecase are very grave and serious. It is calculated, that two hundred and fifty houses have been surrounded by lava or destroyed, almost the fourth part of the town, and with them about a thousand acres of land are destroyed, each acre here is

worth two thousand francs. The lava has thus swallowed two million francs.

And the houses are worth perhaps another million, perhaps more. And there is a suburb Tre Case which has remained cut out from all communications, because the lava surrounds it on every side.

What is done for this country? Our courageous soldiers are working, it is true, M. Acunzo's working men are also desperately working, and the mayor, good M. Casella does what he can. But it is necessary to do much and to give much. This poor devastated and blocated country must spring up to life again, measures must be taken by those that can and must.

The population is all back, and those who have found the little houses un-

touched by the fire, but emptied by thieves, have, gone back to it, providing at best to all that had been stolen, and those who have not found it any longer, have arranged themselves the best they could, resigned, because they hope.

And the hopeful words on everybody's lips, the trusting words repeated by all those who accompanied, me especially by M. Acunzo and Mayor Casella, have greatly moved me for I felt that by encouraging them, I was only an accomplice in a pitiful lie.

Our return has been discouraging, and while our little tram was rapidly going down through the fields, I was looking at the great and silent murderer still proudly showing its top all covered with ashes, almost as an expiation.



## OPEN ROADS





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It is possible now for every body to go everywhere, in the places where the conflagration has passed in all its most varied and terrible forms. The Circumvesuviana and all those great men who are its very soul, strength, and organism accomplish real miracles, from Giuseppe Sirignano, to Emmanuele Rocco and its director Ingaranni, all deserve the deepest sympathy and gratitude. It is owing to them and their abnegation that the Circumvesuviana has been able to resume its work, rendering thus both a great service to the work of help and

to the help organizers. But for them no one could have got to Torre Annunziata, Boscotrecase, Ottaiano, San Giuseppe, or Somma Vesuviana, for the lava, the burning stones, lapillus and ashes have passed every where. Now one may go over there, not only by rail but to certain points by auto, and to some others by carriages. The roads are open. They certainly are not pleasure or excursion roads, you do not go there as you would go to a picnic, but whoever has a charitable heart, may go now and see, this most terrible catastrophe of the Vesuvian comunes. It is a pilgrimage of piety which certainly will bear its good fruits. So many people need to see in order to believe, so many people need to let the truth of human troubles descend from their eyes into their hearts. The roads are

opened for trains , automobiles , carriages, even bicycles, and for those who have to go on foot, many roads are quite practicable. Let every person of good will know it. The misery of the people there is great, help must be great. The crowd, the crowd must go with the 5000 lire, of the modest giver and the 50000 of the richer one. The roads are open, the pilgrimage can be made, without spending much, without asking too much, without taking too much trouble, without losing much time. And those who go will realize how great this calamity is, and how great the remedy must be.

April 23<sup>th</sup> 1906.



THE WAY TO GO



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Well, my dear readers, you who are living in Naples, you who will come to Naples to morrow or later, you can now safely go on the roads damaged by the eruption, by any means of transportation you like. The best, of course, the one I would suggest as the best, being more comfortable, very rapid and suiting all pockets is the quite popular railway of the Circumvesuviana, that same road, which has saved men and things, which is really the best help for the reorganization of life, up there. It will carry you easily to see the lava

at Torre Annunziata, and farther still if you like to see the new Pompei, that is, Ottaiano and S. Giuseppe of Ottaiano. Reader, if you are a woman going, dont wear nice clothes, because there is always some wind raising the ashes and your clothes would be ruined; put on a simple woollen dress, a gown a shirt waist and a simple figaro, so that you may take it off if it gets too hot. Put on a small hat, if you go there by train, and a cap if you go by automobile, and cover up either of them with a white, gray, or pale lilac veil hiding thus your face, your hair, and your neck. If you possess a big white chiffon scarf, wrap up your hat and face in it and tie it under your chin. If you have weak eyes put on a myrtle green or golden brown veil but large and closed. Wear a good pair of black



boots, with low heels and comfortable. A parasol is useless : with your large veil , you are protected from the sun, whilst a parasol would be an encumbrance.

A good stick might not be useless. Then with your short skirt which enable you to walk quickly and well protected from the gushes of ashes raised by the wind, you may go any where you like even on the lava of Boscotrecase, on the mountains of lappillus in Ottaiano, on the observatory and the crater, if you have the strength and courage to do it. You may see all , and know all, and you will return home with a world of new and deep impressions. If you want to breakfast , you will find what is necessary anywhere even in Ottaiano or Boscotrecase, but don't forget to carry within you a tender heart, and any thing

you can possibly gather to give to women and to babies. Anything, an apron or an handkerchief to one single woman, or a small shirt or a little dress to one single child. Dont forget this and God will bless your steps.

April 23<sup>th</sup> 1906.

A PRINCE



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I stop a moment to look at him ! I had always seen him silent and thoughtful through the fields, when the black lava smoked furiously covered by the sepulchral sheet of ashes, in those towns destroyed by the stones, but in that day he was thoughtful and sad, On his brow was written a silent sorrow.

We were in a deserted spot, outside Somma Vesuviana in the saddest hour of that sad Monday, which will never leave anybodies memory. We saw him going away, without daring to inquire from anybody, what could be the reason

of his depression. But two hours later we found out that he had been witnessing at S. Giuseppe the drawing out of the bodies from the ruins of the church, where more than two hundred persons had been buried. Till then the Duke had only witnessed the destruction of the houses and lands where human life had been spared. But there he had seen death, the formidable host, and all the horror of it, and all his sorrow as a man and as a Christian rose from his kind tender heart and showed in his brow.

No commemorative inscription, nor the plause of assemblies can be an adequate recompense to the work of this prince. These forms are all accademical and nearly burocratic. Let them go with the banalities which are stil smo-

tering modern society, it is difficult to escape such conventionalism. For us that is not enough. We think with terror of what would have become of one hundred and fifty thousand people, running away under a rain of fire, if the Duke of Aosta had not been there! We tremble at the thought of what would have happened if he had not thought of all, ordered all, provided to all. What is an inscription, a vote, an applause before this real great soul, where one finds harmoniously blended, the virtues of the soldier and of the Christian? where a prince has all the virtues of a true citizen, where heroism is united to simplicity and where the ardour of good is inefable? Let your memorial stone raise a word of admiration, but all this will never tell how high, pure, efficacious has been the energetic enthusiasm

of Emmanuele Filiberto in order to save a whole population. Let him continue. Dan't you see? All his spirit and will are now ready to every thing. He wants to get to the point. he wants not only to help but he is already looking forward to the building of the places. He wants to save the lands, the fields, he wants work to start over again, he wants every man to build again his roof, his bread. Let him continue.

To morrow every body will forget perhaps the terrible catastrophe. He does not forget, he will not let the others forget, he will surmount every obstacle with his moral strength, he will accomplish a longer, deeper, and more lasting work, he will rebuild a civil life there where it has been destroyed. We, profoundly moved, and full of admiration for all that this prince is doing, we mark this first



period of his great work, where he has saved by his example and his strength of action this country, and we see him going ahead fortified by his faith, towards the greatest of works, and our eyes are wandering, and our soul beleives in him.

April 26 1906.



# INDEX

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QUIA PULVIS ES . . . . .	<i>pag.</i>	17
TOWARDS THE CITY OF FIRE. . . . .	»	23
A PRAYER. . . . .	»	39
IN THE DEAD TOWNS . . . . .	»	49
IN THE COUNTRY OF DEATH . . . . .	»	61
THE HEROES . . . . .	»	85
LET US SPEAK TO THE PEOPLE . . . . .	»	97
TO THE WOMEN OF NAPLES . . . . .	»	107
EASTER OF RESURRECTION . . . . .	»	117
FOUR-THOUSAND LITTLE BOXES . . . . .	»	127
A WOMAN . . . . .	»	133
LET THE GUILTY ONES BE PUNISHED . . . . .	»	143
LET THE LAND BE SAVED . . . . .	»	153
EVERY DAY HAS ITS MORROW . . . . .	»	167
THE NEW POMPEI . . . . .	»	173
IGNIS ARDENS. . . . .	»	201
OPEN ROADS . . . . .	»	223
THE WAY TO GO. . . . .	»	229
A PRINCE . . . . .	»	235

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